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March 22, 2021

The Honorable Philip D. Murphy  
Governor of the State of New Jersey  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 001  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Dear Governor Murphy:

I applaud your administration for getting over 3,500,000 covid-19 vaccine doses into the arms of New Jerseyans since the first shot was given on December 15, 2020.<sup>1</sup> However, I write to you today to express concern about the distribution of vaccines as it pertains to Hudson County, and I respectfully request your partnership to ensure the county is not left behind in New Jersey's vaccine rollout.

Hudson County presently has the lowest vaccination rate of any county in the state, with just 16 doses administered per 100 people thus far.<sup>2</sup> With 672,000 residents, Hudson is the fourth-most populous county in the State, yet is tenth in the total number of vaccine doses administered.<sup>3</sup> Other counties have a rate as high as 33 doses administered per 100 residents. I am deeply concerned that Hudson County residents do not have equitable access to covid-19 vaccinations.

We share a goal of ensuring that vaccines are distributed fairly and equitably across racial and ethnic groups; Hudson County is key to that goal. It is one of New Jersey's most diverse counties, with 42.7 percent Hispanic or Latino, 14.8 percent Black, and 16.4 percent Asian residents.<sup>4</sup> We have long known that the coronavirus disproportionately impacts minority communities. It is now the top cause of death for New Jersey's communities of color and the third for white New Jerseyans.<sup>5</sup> The pandemic's disparate impact on communities of color only increases the importance of equity in vaccine allocations for counties with large populations of historically marginalized groups.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nj.com/coronavirus/2020/12/nj-administers-its-first-covid-19-vaccine-dose-to-university-hospital-nurse.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.njspotlight.com/2021/03/hudson-county-high-covid-19-rate-lowest-vaccination-rate-in-state/>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/hudsoncountynewjersey/RHI225219>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.njspotlight.com/2021/02/covid-19-death-rates-minorities-communities-of-color-black-hispanic-asian/>

I understand that New Jersey uses a covid-19 vaccine allocation framework that considers a variety of factors including inventory, throughput, disease burden, and equity. However, I respectfully ask your administration to examine this disparity in doses administered per capita and to make certain that Hudson County residents receive an equitable allocation of vaccines. Additionally, I request your assistance in identifying and addressing the cause of lagging vaccination rates in Hudson County.

I deeply value the partnership between your office and mine. State and Federal government must continue to work together, as we have thus far, to address the needs of New Jerseyans.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical issue. I look forward to working with you to ensure that the needs of all New Jerseyans are met as the covid-19 vaccine rollout continues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Menendez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a period at the end.

Robert Menendez  
United States Senator